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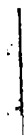
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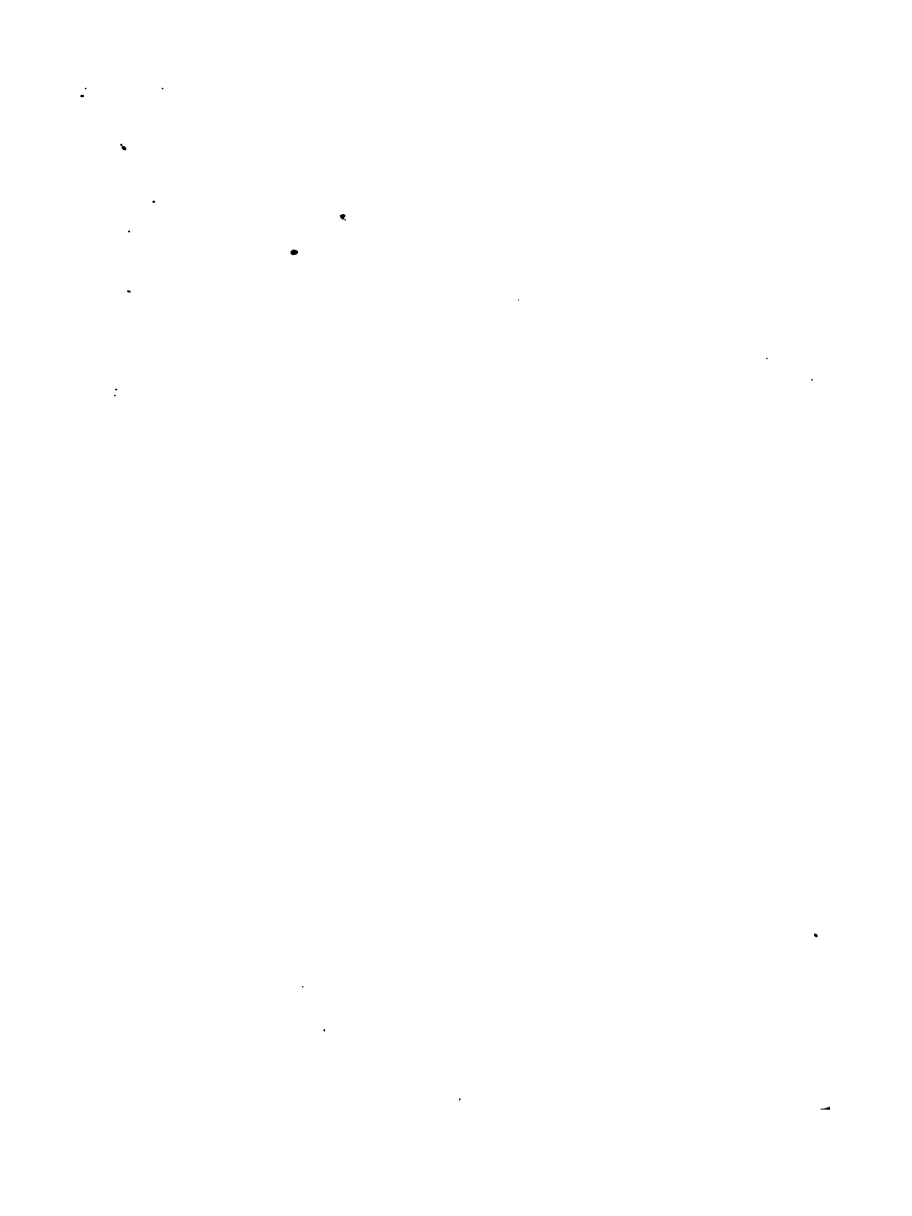
Love



Letters

A Violinist





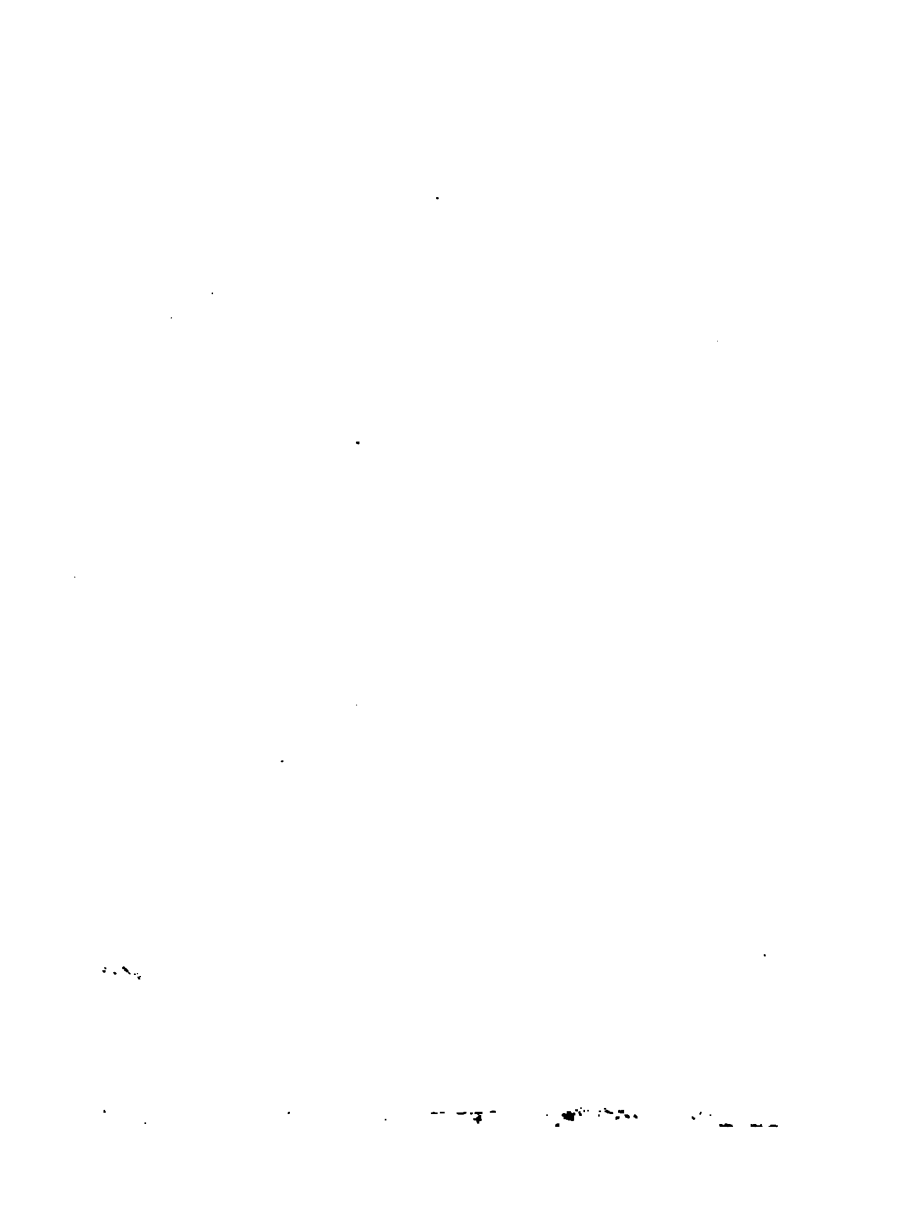
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\* Love Letters \*





# Love Letters



BY

A Violinist



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to

Marie







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Letter i.

# PRELUDE.





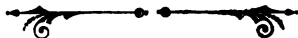


1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".



## LETTER I.

### Prelude.



i.

**T**EACH me to love thee as a man, in prayer,  
May love the picture of a sainted nun,  
And I will woo thee, when the day is done,  
With tears and vows, and fealty past compare,  
And seek the sunlight in thy golden hair,  
And kiss thy hand to claim thy benison.

ii.

**I** shall not need to gaze upon the skies,  
Or mark the message of the morning breeze,  
Or heed the notes of birds among the trees,  
If, taught by thee to yearn for Paradise,  
I may confront thee with adoring eyes  
And do thee homage on my bended knees.

A



## iii.

For I would be thy pilgrim; I would bow  
Low as the grave itself, and in the same  
Live like a spectre ; or be burnt in flame  
To do thee good. A kingdom for a vow  
I'd freely give to be elected now  
The chief of all the servants of thy fame.

## iv.

And, like a Roman of the days of old,  
I would, for thee, construct a votive shrine  
And fan the fire, and consecrate the wine:  
And have a statue there, of purest gold,  
And bow thereto, unlov'd and unconsol'd,  
But proud withal to know the statue thine.

## v.

For it were sacrilege to stand erect,  
And face to face, within thy chamber lone,  
To urge again my right to what hath flown :  
A bygone trust, a passion coldly check'd !  
Were I a king of men, or laurel-deck'd,  
I were not fit to claim thee as mine own.

vi.

What am I then ? The sexton of a joy,  
So lately slain,—so lately on its bier  
Laid out in state,—I dare not, for the fear  
Of this dead thing, regard it as a toy.  
It was a splendid Hope without alloy,  
And now, behold ! I greet it with a tear.

vii.

It is my pastime and my penance, too,  
My pride, my comfort, and my discontent,  
To count my sorrows ere the day is spent,  
And dream, at night, of love within the blue  
Of thy sweet eyes, and tremble through and through,  
And keep my house, as one that doth lament.

viii.

Have I not sinn'd ? I have ; and I am curst,  
And Misery makes the moments, as they fly,  
Harder than stone, and sorrier than a sigh.  
Oh, I did wrong thee when I met thee first,  
And in my soul a phantasy was nurs'd  
That seem'd an outcome of the upper sky.

## ix.

**J** thought a poor musician might aspire ;  
I thought he might obtain from thee a look,  
As Dian's self will smile upon a brook,  
And make it glad, though deaf to its desire,  
And tinge its ripples with a tender fire,  
And make it thankful in its lonely nook.

## x.

**J** thought to win thee ere the waning days  
Had caught the snow, ere yet a word of mine  
Had pall'd upon thee in the summer shine ;  
And I was fain to meet thee in the ways  
Of wild romance, and cling to thee, and gaze,  
Between two kisses, on thy face divine.

## xi.

**A**ye ! on thy face, and on the rippling hair  
That makes a mantle round thee in the night,  
A royal robe, a network of the light,  
Which fairies brought for thee, to keep thee fair,  
And hide the glories of a beauty rare  
As those of sylphs, whereof the poets write.

## xii.

I thought, by token of thy matchless form,  
To curb thy will, and make thee mine indeed,  
From head to foot. There is no other creed  
For men and maids, in safety or in storm,  
Than this of love. Repentance may be warm,  
But love is best, though broken like a reed.

## xiii.

"He shall be mine till death !" I madly said,  
"Mine, and mine only." And I vow'd, apace,  
That I would have thee in my dwelling place.  
Yea, like a despot, I would see thee led  
Straight to the altar, with a tear unshed,  
A wordless woe imprinted on thy face.

## xiv.

I wanted thee. I yearn'd for thee afar.  
"She shall be mine," I cried, "and mine alone;  
A Gorgon grief may change me into stone  
If I be baulk'd." I hankered for a star,  
And soar'd, in thought, to where the angels are,  
To snatch my prize beyond the torrid zone.

## xv.

**J** heeded not the teaching of the past.  
I heeded not the wisdom of the years.  
"She shall be mine," I urged, "till death appears,  
For death, I know, will conquer me at last."  
And then I found the sky was overcast ;  
And then I felt the bitterness of tears.

## xvi.

**B**ehold !" I cried, "Behold, how fair to see  
Is this white wonder !" And I wish'd thee well,  
But, like a demon out of darkest hell,  
I sought thy sire, and claim'd thee on the plea  
Of bad old Shylock ; and there came to me  
The far-off warning of a wedding-bell.

## xvii.

**A** friend of thine was walking to her doom,  
A wife-elect who—ere the noon-day sun  
Had plied its course—would weep for what was  
And look for solace in the inner gloom [done,  
Of her own soul, and find it in a tomb,  
Years later on, when tears had ceas'd to run.

## xviii.

On this I brooded ; but ah ! not for this  
Did I abandon what I sought the while :  
The dear damnation of thy seraph smile,  
And all the tortures that were like a bliss,  
And all the raptures of a holier kiss  
Than fair Miranda's on the magic isle.

## xix.

J urged my suit. " My bond !" I did exclaim,  
" My pink and white, the hand I love to press,  
The golden hair that crowns her loveliness ;  
And all the beauties which I cannot name ;  
All, all are mine, and I will have the same."  
And then I trembled in my love's excess.

## xx.

J knew myself. I knew the withering fate  
That would consume me, if, amid my trust,  
I sued for Hope as beggars for a crust.  
" O God !" I cried, entranced though desolate,  
" Hallow my love, or turn it into hate."  
And then I bow'd, in anguish, to the dust.







Letter ii.

# S O R R O W .

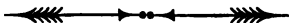






## LETTER II

Gorrow.



i.

**Y**ES, I was mad. I know it. I was mad.  
For there is madness in the looks of love ;  
And he who frights a tender, brooding dove  
Is not more base than I, and not so sad ;  
For I had kill'd the hope that made me glad,  
And curs'd, in thought, the sunlight from above.

ii.

**H**e was a fool, indeed, who lately tried  
To touch the moon, far-shining in the trees.  
He clomb the branches with his hands and knees,  
And craned his neck to kiss what he espied.  
But down he fell, unseemly in his pride,  
And told his follies to the fitful breeze.



## iii.

**I** was convicted of as strange a thing,  
And wild as strange ; for, in a hope forlorn  
I fought with Fate. But now the flag is torn  
Which like a herald in the days of spring  
I held aloft. The birds have ceased to sing  
The dear old songs they sang from morn to morn.

## iv.

**A**ll holy things avoid me. Breezes pass  
And will not fan my cheek, as once they did.  
The gloaming hies away like one forbid ;  
And day returns, and shadows on the grass  
Fall from the trees ; and night and morn amass  
No joys for me this side the coffin-lid.

## v.

**A**bsolve me, Sweet ! Absolve me, or I die ;  
And give me pardon, if no other boon.  
Aye, give me pardon, and the sun and moon,  
And all the stars that wander through the sky  
Will be thy sponsors, and the gladden'd cry  
Of one poor heart will thank thee for it soon.

## vi.

And mine Amati—my belovèd one—  
The tender sprite who soothes, as best he may,  
My fever'd pulse, and makes a roundelay  
Of all my fears—e'en he, when all is done,  
Will be thy friend, and yield his place to none  
To wish thee well, and greet thee day by day.

## vii.

For he is human, though, to look at him—  
To see his shape, to hear (as from the throat  
Of some bright angel) his ecstatic note—  
A sinful soul might dream of cherubim ;  
And he is watchful when my senses swim,  
Though I can trace the thoughts that o'er him float.

## viii.

Often, indeed, I tell him more than man  
E'er tells to woman in the honied hours  
Of trancèd night, in cities or in bowers ;  
And more, perchance, than lovers in the span  
Of absent letters may, with scheming, plan  
For life's surrender in the fairy towers.

## ix.

And he consoles me. There is none I find,  
None in the world, so venturesome and wild,  
And yet withal, so tender, true, and mild,  
As he can be. And those who think him blind  
Are much to blame. His ways are ever kind ;  
And he can plead as softly as a child.

## x.

And when he talks to me I feel the touch  
Of some sweet hope, a feeling of content  
Almost akin to what by joy is meant.  
And then I brood on this ; for Love is such,  
It makes us weep to want it overmuch,  
If wayward Fate withhold his full consent.

## xi.

Oh, come to me, thou friend of my desire,  
My lov'd Amati ! At a word of thine  
I can be brave, and dash away the brine  
From off my cheek, and neutralize the fire  
That makes me mad, and use thee as a lyre  
To curb the anguish of this soul of mine.

---

## xii.

Wood as thou art, my treasure, with the strings  
Fair on thy form, as fits thy parentage,  
I cannot deem that in a gilded cage  
Thy spirit lives. The bird that in thee sings  
Is not a mortal. No! Enthralment flings  
Its charm about thee like a poet's rage.

## xiii.

Thou hast no sex ; but, in an elfish way,  
Thou dost entwine in one, as in a troth,  
The gleesome thoughts of man and maiden both.  
Thy voice is fullest at the flush of day,  
But after midnight there is much to say  
In weird remembrance of an April oath.

## xiv.

And when the moon is seated on the throne  
Of some white cloud, with her attendants near—  
The wondering stars that hold her name in fear—  
Oh ! then I know that mine Amati's tone  
Is all for me, and that he stands alone,  
First of his tribe, belov'd, without a peer.



## xv.

**Y**ea, this is so, my Lady ! A fair form  
Made of the garner'd relics of a tree,  
In which of old a dryad of the lea  
Did live and die. He flourish'd in a storm,  
And learnt to warble when the days were warm,  
And learnt at night the secrets of the sea.

## xvi.

**A**nd now he is all mine—for my caress  
And my strong bow—an Ariel, as it seems—  
A something sweeter than the sweetest dreams;  
A prison'd wizard that has come to bless  
And will not curse, though tortured, more or less,  
By some remembrance that athwart him streams.

## xvii.

**I**t is the thought of April. 'Tis the tie  
That made us one ; for then the earth was fair  
With all things on't, and summer in the air  
Tingled for thee and me. A soft reply  
Came to thy lips, and I was like to die  
To hear thee make such coy confessions there.

## xviii.

**I**t was the dawn of love (or so I thought)  
The tender cooing of thy bosom-bird—  
The beating heart, that flutter'd at a word,  
And seem'd for me alone to be so fraught  
With wants unutter'd ! All my being caught,  
Glamor thereat, as at a boon conferr'd.

## xix.

**A**nd I was lifted, in a minute's space,  
As nigh to Heaven as Heaven is nigh to thee,  
And in thy wistful glances I could see  
Something that seem'd a joy, and in thy face  
A splendor fit for angels in the place  
Where God has named them all in their degree.

## xx.

**A**nd none so blest as I, and none so proud,  
In that wild moment when a thrill was sent  
Right through my soul, as if from thee it went  
As flame from fire ! But this was disallow'd ;  
And I shall sooner wear a winter shroud  
Than thou revoke my doom of banishment.





Letter iii.

# REGRETS.







## LETTER III.

### Regrets.



i.

**W**HEN I did wake, to-day, a bird of Heaven,  
A wanton, woelless thing, a wandering sprite,  
Did seem to sing a song for my delight ;  
And, far away, did make its holy steven  
Sweeter to hear than lute strings that are seven ;  
And I did weep thereat in my despite.

ii.

**O** glorious sun ! I thought, O gracious king  
Of all this splendor that we call the earth !  
For thee the lark distils his morning mirth,  
But who will hear the matins that I sing ?  
Who will be glad to greet me in the spring,  
Or heed the voice of one so little worth ?

## iii.

Who will accept the thanks I would entone  
For having met thee, and for having seen  
Thy face an instant in the bower serene  
Of perfect faith ? The splendour was thine own,  
The rapture mine ; and Doubt was overthrown,  
And Grief forgot the keynote of its threne.

## iv.

rose in haste. I seiz'd, as in a trance,  
My violin, the friend I love the best  
(After thyself, sweet soul !) and wildly press'd,  
And firmly drew it, with a master's glance  
Straight to my heart ! The sunbeams seem'd to dance  
Athwart the strings, to rob me of my rest.

## v.

For then a living thing it did appear,  
And every chord had sympathies for me ;  
And something like a lover's lowly plea  
Did shake its frame, and something like a tear  
Fell on my cheek, to mind me of the year  
When first we met, we two, beside the sea.

## vi.

**I** stood erect, I proudly lifted up  
The Sword of Song, the bow that trembled now,  
As if for joy, my grief to disallow.—  
Are there not some who, in the choicest cup,  
Imbibe despair, and famish as they sup,  
Sear'd by a solace that was like a vow ?

## vii.

**A**re there not some who weep, and cannot tell  
Why it is thus ? And others who repeat  
Stories of ice, to cool them in the heat ?  
And some who quake for doubts they cannot quell,  
And yet are brave ? And some who smile in Hell  
For thinking of the sin that was so sweet ?

## viii.

**I** have been one who, in the glow of youth,  
Have liv'd in books, and realized a bliss  
Unfelt by misers, when they count and kiss  
Their minted joys ; and I have known, in sooth,  
The taste of water from the well of Truth,  
And found it good. But Time has alter'd this.



ix.

I have been hated, scorn'd, and thrust away,  
By one who is the regent of the flowers,  
By one who, in the magic of her powers,  
Changes the day to night, the night to day,  
And makes a potion of the solar ray  
Which drugs my heart, and deadens it for hours.

x.

I have been taught that Happiness is coy,  
And will not come to all who bend the knee ;  
That Faith is like the foam upon the sea,  
And Pride a snare, and Pomp a foolish toy,  
And Hope a moth whose wings we may destroy ;  
And she I love has taught these things to me.

xi.

Yes, thou, my Lady ! Thou hast made me feel  
The pangs of that Prometheus who was chain'd  
And would not bow, but evermore maintain'd  
A fierce revolt. Have I refused to kneel ?  
I do it gladly. But to mine appeal  
No answer comes, and none will be ordain'd.

## xii.

Why, then, this rancour ? Why so cold a thing  
As thy displeasure, O thou dearest One ?  
I meant no wrong. I stole not from the sun  
The fire of Heaven ; but I did seek to bring  
Glory from thee to me ; and in the Spring  
I pray'd the prayer that left me thus undone.

## xiii.

I pray'd my prayer. I wove into my song  
Fervour, and joy, and mystery, and the bleak,  
The wan despair that words could never speak.  
I pray'd as if my spirit did belong  
To some old master, who was wise and strong  
Because he lov'd, and suffer'd, and was weak.

## xiv.

I trill'd the notes, and curb'd them to a sigh ;  
And, when they falter'd most, I made them leap  
Fierce from my bow, as from a summer sleep  
A young she-devil. I was fired thereby  
To bolder efforts, and a muffled cry  
Came from the strings, as if a saint did weep.

## xv.

**J**changed the theme. I dallied with the bow  
Just time enough to fit it to a mesh  
Of merry tones, and drew it back afresh  
To talk of truth and constancy and woe,  
And life, and love, and madness, and the glow  
Of mine own soul which burns into my flesh.

## xvi.

**I**t was the lord of music ; it was he  
Who seiz'd my hand, and forced me, as I play'd,  
To think of that ill-fated fairy-glade  
In which we stroll'd at night ; and wild and free  
My notes did ring ; and quickly unto me  
There came the joy that maketh us afraid.

## xvii.

**O**h ! I shall die of tasting in my dreams  
Poison of love and ecstasy of pain ;  
For I shall never kneel to thee again,  
Or sit in bowers, or wander by the streams  
Of golden vales, or of the morning beams  
Construct a wreath to crown thee on the plain.

## xviii.

Yet it were easy, too, to compass this,  
If thou wert kind ; and easy to my soul  
Were harder things if I could reach the goal  
Of all I crave, and consummate a bliss  
In mine own fashion, and compel a kiss  
More fraught with honor than a king's controul.

## xix.

It is not much to say that I would die ;  
It is not much to say that I would dare  
Torture, and doom, and death, could I but share  
One kiss with thee. For then, without a sigh,  
I'd teach thee pity, and be graced thereby,  
Wet with thy tears, and shrouded by thy hair.

## xx.

It is not much to say that this is so ;  
Yet I would sell my substance and my breath,  
And all the joy that comes from Nazareth,  
And all the peace that all the angels know,  
To lie with thee, one minute, in the snow  
Of thy white bosom, ere I sank in death.





Letter iv.

# YEARNINGS.

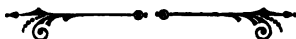






## LETTER IV.

### Yearnings.



i.

THE earth is glad, I know, when night is spent,  
For then she wakes the birdlings in the bowers ;  
And, one by one, the rosy-footed hours  
Start for the race ; and from his crimson tent  
The soldier sun looks o'er the firmament ;  
And all his path is strewn with festal flowers.

ii.

BUT what his mission ? What the happy quest  
Of all his toil ? He journeys on his way  
As Cæsar did, unbiass'd by the sway  
Of maid or man. His goal is in the west.  
Will he unbuckle there, and, in his rest,  
Dream of the gods who died in Nero's day ?



## iii.

Will he arraign the traitor in his camp ?  
The Winter Comet who, with streaming hair,  
Attack'd the sweetest of the Pleiads fair  
And ravish'd her, and left her in the damp  
Of dull decay, nor re-illumed the lamp  
That show'd the place she occupied in air.

## iv.

No ; 'tis not so ! He seeks his lady-moon,  
The gentle orb for whom Endymion sigh'd,  
And trusts to find her by the ocean tide,  
Or near a forest in the coming June ;  
For he has lov'd her since she late did swoon  
In that eclipse of which she nearly died.

## v.

He knew her then ; he knew her in the glow  
Of all her charms. He knew that she was chaste,  
And that she wore a girdle at her waist  
Whiter than pearl. And when he eyed her so  
He knew that in the final overthrow  
He should prevail, and she should be embraced.

## vi

But were I minded thus, were I the sun,  
And thou the moon, I would not bide so long  
To hear the marvels of thy wedding song ;  
For I would have the planets, every one,  
Conduct thee home, before the day was done,  
And call thee queen, and crown thee in the throng.

## vii.

And like Apollo, I would flash on thee,  
And rend thy veil, and call thee by the name  
That Daphne lov'd, the loadstar of his fame;  
And make myself for thee as white to see  
As whitest marble, and as wildly free  
As Leda's lover with his look of flame.

## viii.

And there should then be fêtes that should not cease  
Till I had kiss'd thee, lov'd one ! in a trance  
Lasting a life-time, through a life's romance ;  
And every star should have a mate apiece,  
And I would teach them how, in ancient Greece,  
The gods were masters of the maidens' dance.

## ix.

**J** should be bold to act ; and thou should'st feel  
Terror and joy combined, in all the span  
Of thy sweet body, ere my fingers ran  
From curl to curl, to prompt thee how to kneel ;  
And then, soul-stricken by thy mute appeal,  
I should be quick to answer like a man.

## x.

**W**hat ! have I sinn'd, dear lady ? have I sinn'd  
To talk so wildly ? Have I sinn'd in this ?  
An angel's mouth was surely meant to kiss !  
Or have I dreamt of courtship out in Inde  
In some wild wood ? My soul is fever-thinn'd,  
And fierce and faint, and frauded of its bliss.

## xi.

**J** will not weep. I will not in the night  
Weep or lament, or, bending on my knees,  
Appeal for pity ! In the clustered trees  
The wind is boasting of its one delight ;  
And I will boast of mine, in thy despite,  
And say I love thee more than all of these.

## xii.

The rose in bloom, the linnet as it sings,  
The fox, the fawn, the cygnet on the mere,  
The dragon-fly that glitters like a spear,—  
All these and more, all these ecstatic things,  
Possess their mates; and some arrive on wings,  
And some on webs, to make their meanings clear.

## xiii.

Yea, all these things, and more than I can tell,  
More than the most we know of, one and all,  
Do talk of love. There is no other call  
From wind to wave, from rose to asphodel,  
Than love's alone—the thing we cannot quell,  
Do what we will, from font to funeral.

## xiv.

What have I done, I only on the earth,  
That I should wait a century for a word?  
A hundred years, I know, have been deferr'd  
Since last we met, and then it was in dearth  
Of gladsome place; for, in a moment's girth,  
My shuddering soul was wounded like a bird.

## xv.

**J** knew thy voice. I knew the veering sound  
Of that sweet oracle which once did tend  
To treat me grandly, as we treat a friend ;  
And I would know't if darkly underground  
I lay as dead, or, down among the drown'd,  
I blindly stared, unvalued to the end.

## xvi.

**T**here ! take again the kiss I took from thee  
Last night in sleep. I met thee in a dream  
And drew thee closer than a monk may deem  
Good for the soul. I know not how it be ,  
But this I know : if God be good to me  
I shall be raised again to thine esteem.

## xvii.

**J** touched thy neck. I kiss'd it. I was bold.  
And bold am I, to-day, to call to mind  
How, in the night, a murmur not unkind  
Broke on mine ear ; a something new and old  
Quick in thy breath, as when a tale is told  
Of some great hope with madness intertwined.

## xviii.

And round my lips, in joy and yet in fear,  
There seemed to dart the stings of kisses warm.  
They were my honey-bees, and soon would swarm  
To choose their queen. But ere they did appear,  
I heard again that murmur in mine ear  
Which seem'd to speak of calm before a storm.

## xix.

"What is it love?" I whispered in my sleep,  
And turned to thee, as April unto May.  
"Art mine in truth, mine own by night and day,  
Now and for ever?" And I heard thee weep,  
And then persuade; and then my soul did leap  
Swiftly to thine, in love's ecstatic sway.

## xx.

J fondled thee; I drew thee to my heart,  
Well knowing in the dark that joy is dumb.  
And then a cry, a sigh, a sob did come  
Forth from thy lips. I waken'd with a start,  
To find thee gone. The day had taken part  
Against the total of my blisses' sum.



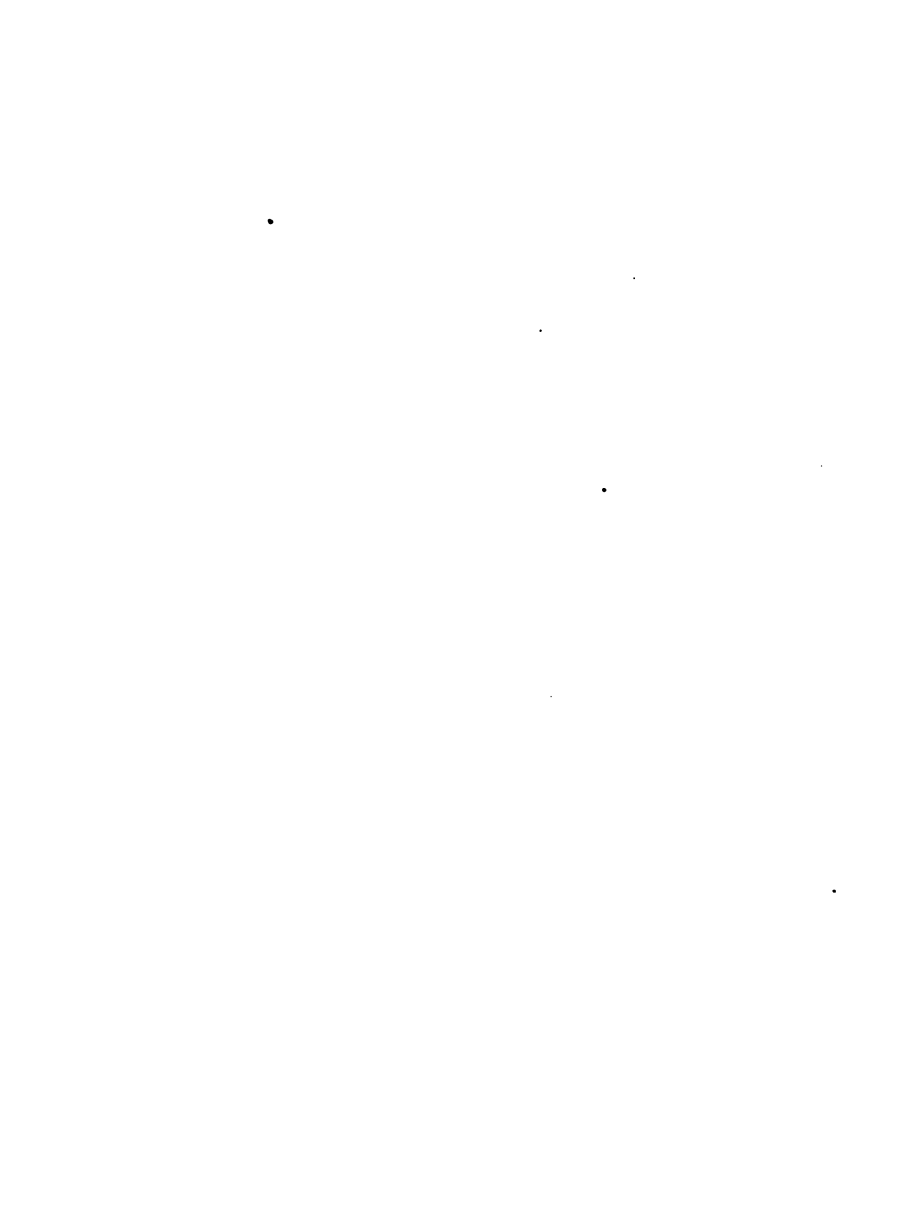


Letter v.

# CONFESSIONS.









L E T T E R V.

Confessions.



i.

O LADY mine ! O Lady of my Life !  
Mine and not mine, a being of the sky  
Turn'd into Woman, and I know not why—  
Is't well, bethink thee, to maintain a strife  
With thy poor servant ? War unto the knife  
Because I greet thee with a lover's eye ?

ii.

J's't well to visit me with thy disdain,  
And rack my soul because, for love of thee,  
I was too prone to sink upon my knee,  
And too intent to make my meaning plain,  
And too resolv'd to make my loss a gain  
To do thee good, by Love's immortal plea ?

D

## iii.

O friend ! forgive me for my dream of bliss.  
    Forgive ; forget ; be just ! Wilt not forgive ?  
    Not though my tears should fall, as through a sieve  
The salt-sea sand ? What joy hast thou in this :  
To be a maid, and marvel at a kiss ?  
    Say ! Must I die, to prove that I can live ?

## iv.

Shall this be so ? E'en this ? And all my love  
    Wreck'd in an instant ? No ; a gentle heart  
    Beats in thy bosom ; and the shades depart  
From all fair gardens, and from skies above,  
When thou art near. For thou art like a dove,  
    And dainty thoughts are with thee where thou art.

## v.

Oh ! it is like the death of dearest kin,  
    To wake and find the fancies of the brain  
    Sear'd and confused. We languish in the strain  
Of some lost music, and we find within,  
Deep in the heart, the record of a sin,  
    The thrill thereof, and all the blissful pain.

vi.

For it is deadly sin to love too well,  
 And unappeased, unhonour'd, unbesought,  
 To feed on dreams ; and yet 'tis aptly thought  
 That all must love. E'en those who most rebel  
 In Eros' camp have known his master-spell ;  
 And more shall learn than Eros yet has taught.

vii.

But I am mad to love. I am not wise.  
 I am the worst of men to love the best  
 Of all sweet women ! An untimely jest,  
 A thing made up of rhapsodies and sighs,  
 And unordain'd on earth, and in the skies,  
 And undesired in tumult or in rest.

viii.

All this is true. I know it. I am he.  
 I am that man. I am the hated friend  
 Who once receiv'd a smile, and sought to mend  
 His soul with hope. O tyrant ! by the plea  
 Of all thy grace, do thou accept from me  
 At least the notes that know not to offend.

## ix.

**G**ee ! I will strike again the major chord  
Of that great song, which, in his early days  
Beethoven wrote ; and thine shall be the praise,  
And thine the frenzy like a soldier's sword  
Flashing therein ; and thine, O thou adored,  
And bright true lady ! all the poet's lays.

## x.

**T**o thee, to thee, the songs of all my joy,  
And those that in their fury seem to bless,  
And those that mind thee of a past caress ;  
And with a whisper to the Wingèd Boy  
Who rules my fate, I will my strength employ  
To make a matin song of my distress.

## xi.

**F**or playing thus, and toying with the notes,  
I half forget the cause I have to weep ;  
And, like a reaper in the realms of sleep,  
I hear the bird of morning where he floats  
High in the welkin, and, in fairy boats,  
I see the minstrels sail upon the deep.

xii.

In mid-suspension of my leaping bow  
 I almost hear the silence of the night ;  
 And, in my soul, I know the stars are bright,  
 Because they love, and that they nightly glow  
 To make it clear that there is nought below,  
 And nought above, so fair as Love's delight.

xiii.

But shall I touch thy heart by speech alone,  
 Without Amati ? Shall I prove, by words,  
 That hope is meant for men as well as birds ;  
 That I would take a scorpion, or a stone,  
 In lieu of gold, and sacrifice a throne  
 To be the keeper of thy flocks and herds ?

xiv.

Ah no, my Lady ! though I sang to thee  
 With fuller voice than sings the nightingale—  
 Fuller and softer in the moonlight pale  
 Than lays of Keats, or Shelley, or the free  
 And fire-lipp'd Byron—there would come to me  
 No word of thine to thank me for the tale.

## xv.


Thou would'st not heed. Thou would'st not any when,  
In bower or grove—or in the holy nook [look  
Which shields thy bed—thou would'st not care to  
For thoughts of mine, though faithful in their ken  
As are the minds of England's fighting men  
When they inscribe their names in Honour's book.

## xvi.

Thou would'st not care to scan my face, and through  
This face of mine, the soul, for scraps of thought.  
Yet 'tis a face that somewhere has been taught  
To smile in tears. Mine eyes are somewhat blue  
And quick to flash (if what I hear be true)  
And dark, at times, as velvet newly wrought.

## xvii.

But wilt thou own it? Wilt thou in the scroll  
Of my sad life, perceive, as in a hive  
A thousand happy fancies that contrive  
To seek thee out? Thy bosom is the goal  
Of all my thoughts; and quick to thy control,  
They wend their way, elate to be alive.



xviii.

But there is something I could never bring  
 My soul to compass. No ! could I compel  
 Thy plighted troth, I would not have thee tell  
 A lie to God. I'll have no wedding-ring,  
 With loveless arms around my neck to cling ;  
 For this were worse than all the fires of hell.

xix.

I would not take thee from a lover's lips,  
 Or from the rostrum of a roaring crowd,  
 Or from the memory of a husband's shroud,  
 Or from the goblet where a Cæsar sips.  
 I would not touch thee with my finger tips,  
 But I would die to serve thee,—and be proud.

xx.

And could I enter Heaven, and find therein,  
 In all the wide dominions of the air,  
 No trace of thee among the natives there,  
 I would not bide with them—No ! not to win  
 A seraph's lyre—but I would sin a sin,  
 And free my soul, and seek thee elsewhere.







Letter vi.

# DESPAIR.

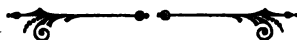






## LETTER VI.

### Despair.



i.

**I** AM undone. My hopes have beggar'd me,  
For I have lov'd where loving was denied.  
To-day is dark, and yesterday has died,  
And when to-morrow comes, erect and free,  
Like some great king, whose tyrant will he be,  
And whose defender, in the days of pride?

ii.

**I** am not cold, and yet November bands  
Compress my heart. I know the month is May,  
And that the sun will warm me if I stay.  
But who is this? Oh, who is this that stands  
Straight in my path, and with his bony hands  
Appeals to me to turn some other way?



## iii.

**I**t is the phantom of my murder'd joy,  
Which once again has come to persecute,  
And tell me tales which late I did refute.  
But lo! I now must heed them, as a boy  
Takes up, in tears, the remnants of a toy,  
Or bard forlorn the fragments of a lute.

## iv.

**I**t is the ghost that, day by day, did come  
To tempt my spirit to the mountain peak ;  
It is the thing that wept, and would not speak,  
And, with a sign, to show that it was dumb,  
Did seem to hint at Death that was the sum  
Of all we know, and all we strive to seek.

## v.

**A**nd now it comes again, and with its eye  
Bloodshot and blear, though pallid in its face,  
Doth point, exacting, to the very place  
Where I do keep, that no one may descry,  
A lady's glove, a ribbon, and a dry,  
A perjur'd rose, which oft I did embrace.

## vi.

**I**t means, perchance, that I must make an end  
Of all these things, and burn them as a fee  
To my Despair, when down upon my knee.  
O piteous thing ! have pity ; be my friend ;  
Or say, at least, that blessings will descend  
On her I love, on her if not on me.

## vii.

**T**he Shape did smile ; and, wildly, with a start,  
Did shrivel up, as when a fire is spent,  
Whereof the smoke obscures the firmament.  
And then I knew 'twas come to try my heart,  
To teach me how to play a manly part,  
And strengthen me in all my good intent.

## viii.

**A**nd here I stand, e'en like a lonely leaf  
In sudden frost, as quiet as the wing  
Of wounded bird, which knows it cannot sing.  
A child may moan, but not a mountain chief.  
If we be sad, if we possess a grief,  
The grief should be the slave, and not the king.

## ix.

Yes, I will pause, and pluck from out the Past  
The full discernment of my sorry cheer,  
And why the sunlight seems no longer clear,  
And why, in spite of anguish and the vast,  
The sickly blank that o'er my life is cast,  
I cannot kneel to-day, or shed a tear.

## x.

It was thy friendship. It was this I had,  
This and no more. I was a fool to doubt.  
I was a fool to strive to put to rout  
My many foes, thy musings tender-glad,  
Which all had said :—" Avoid him ! He is mad —  
Mad with his love, and Love's erratic shout."

## xi.

I should have known. I should have guess'd in time  
That, like a soft mirage at twilight hour,  
My dream would melt, and rob me of its dower.  
I should have guess'd that all the heights sublime,  
Which look'd like spires and cities built in rhyme,  
Would droop and die, like petals from a flower.

## xii.

♫ I should have known, indeed, that to the brave  
All things are servants. But my lost Delight  
Was like the ship that founders in a night,  
And leaves no mark. How then ? Is Passion's grave  
All that is left beside the sobbing wave ?  
The foam thereof, the saltness, and the blight ?

## xiii.

♫ I had a fleet of ships, and where are they ?  
Where are they all ? and where the merchandise  
I treasured once—an empire's golden prize,  
The empire of a soul which, in a day,  
Lost all its wealth ? I was deceiv'd, I say,  
For I had reckon'd on propitious skies.

## xiv.

♫ I look'd afar, and saw no sign of wrack.  
I look'd anear, and felt the summer breeze  
Warm on my cheek ; and forth upon the seas  
I sent my ships ; and would not have them back,  
Though some averr'd a storm was on the track  
Of all I lov'd, and all I own'd of these.



## xv.

One ship was "Joy," the second "Truth," the third  
"Love in a Dream," and, last not least of all,  
"Hope," and "Content," and "Pride that hath a  
And they were goodly vessels, by my word, [Fall."  
With sails as strong as pinions of a bird,  
And crew that answer'd well to Duty's call.

## xvi.

In one of these—in "Hope"—where I did fly  
A lofty banner, in this ship I found  
My doom at last, and all my crew were drown'd.  
Yes, I was wreck'd in this, and here I lie,  
Here on the beach, forlorn and like to die,  
With none to pray for me on holy ground.

## xvii.

O sweet my Lady! If thou pass this way,  
If thou behold me where I lie beset  
By wind and wave, and powerless to forget,  
Wilt not approach me thoughtfully and say:—  
"This man was true. He lov'd me night and day,  
And though I spurn'd at him he loves me yet."

xviii.

Wilt not withhold thy blame, at least to-night,  
 And shed for me a tear, as one may grieve  
 For people known in books, for men who weave  
 Ropes out of sand, to lead them to the light ?  
 Oh ! treat me thus, and, by thy hand so white,  
 I will forego the dreams to which I cleave.

xix.

Be just to me, and say when all is o'er,  
 When some such book is calmly laid aside :  
 "The shadow-men have liv'd and lov'd and died;  
 The shadow-women will be vex't no more.  
 But there is One for whom my heart is sore,  
 Because he took a shadow for his guide."

xx.

Gay only this ; but pray for me withal,  
 And let a pitying thought possess thee then,  
 Whether at home, at sea, or in a glen  
 In some wild nook. It were a joy to fall  
 Dead at thy feet, as at a trumpet's call,  
 For I should then be peerless among men.





Letter vii.

\* H O P E \*







## LETTER VII.

hope.



i.

**O** TEARS of mine that start I know not why,  
Unless, indeed, to prove that I am glad,  
Albeit so wedded to a thought so sad  
I scarce can think that my despair will die,  
Or that the sun, careering up the sky,  
Will warm again a world that seem'd so mad.

ii.

**A**nd yet, who knows? The world is, to the mind,  
Much as we make it; and the things we tend  
Wear, for the nonce, the liveries that we lend.  
And some such things are fair, though ill-defined,  
And some are fleeting, like the wintry wind;  
And some begin, and some will never end.

## iii.

How can I think, ye tears ! that I have been  
The thing I was—so doubting, so unfit,  
And so unblest, with brows for ever knit,  
And hair unkempt, and face becoming lean  
And cold and pale, as if I late had seen  
Medusa's head, and all the scowls of it ?

## iv.

Oh, why is this ? Oh, why have I so long  
Brooded on grief, and made myself a bane  
To golden fields and all the happy plain  
Where once I met the Lady of my Song,  
The lady for whose sake I shall be strong,  
But never weak or diffident again ?

## v.

I was too shorn of hope. I did employ  
Words like a mourner ; and to Her I bow'd,  
As one might kneel to Glory in a shroud.  
But I am crown'd to-day, and not so coy—  
Crown'd with a kiss, and sceptred with a joy ;  
And all the world shall see that I am proud.

## vi.

I shall be sated now. I shall receive  
More than the guerdon of my wildest thought,  
More than the most that ecstasy has taught  
To saints in Heaven; and more than poets weave  
In madcap verse, to warn us, or deceive ;  
And more than Adam knew ere Eve was brought.

## vii.

I know the meaning now of all the signs,  
And all the joys I dreamt of in my dreams.  
I realize the comfort of the streams  
When they reflect the shadows of the pines.  
I know that there is hope for celandines,  
And that a tree is merrier than it seems.

## viii.

I know the mighty hills have much to tell ;  
And that they quake, at times, in undertone,  
And talk to stars, because so much alone  
And so unlov'd. I know that, in the dell,  
Flowers are betroth'd, and that a wedding-bell  
Rings in the breeze on which a moth has flown.



## ix.

I know such things, because to loving hearts  
Nature is keen, and pleasures, long delay'd,  
Quicken the pulse, and turn a truant shade  
Into a sprite, equipp'd with all the darts  
That once were Cupid's ; and the day departs,  
And sun and moon conjoin, as man with maid.

## x.

The lover knows how grand a thing is love,  
How grand, how sweet a thing, and how divine;  
More than the pouring out of choicest wine,  
More than the whiteness of the whitest dove ;  
More than the glittering of the stars above ;  
And such a love, O Love ! is thine and mine.

## xi.

To me the world, to-day, has grown so fair  
I dare not trust myself to think of it.  
Visions of light around me seem to flit,  
And Phœbus loosens all his golden hair  
Right down the sky ; and daisies turn and stare  
At things we see not with our human wit.

## xii.

And here, beside me, there are mosses green  
In shelter'd nooks, and gnats in bright array,  
And lordly beetles out for holiday ;  
And spiders small that work in silver sheen  
To make a kirtle for the Fairy Queen,  
That she may don it on the first of May.

## xiii.

Almost I hear, in thought, the very words  
That Arethusa, turn'd into a brook,  
Spoke to Diana, when her leave she took  
Of all she lov'd,—low-weeping as the birds  
Shrill'd out of tune, and all the frightened herds  
Scamper'd to death, in spite of pipe and crook.

## xiv.

I know, to-day, why winds were made to sigh,  
And why they hide themselves, and why they gloat  
In some old ruin ! Mote confers with mote,  
And shell with shell ; and corals live and die,  
And die and live, below the deep. And why ?  
To make a necklace for my lady's throat.

## xv.

And yet the world, in all its varied girth,  
Lacks what we look for. There is something base  
In mere existence—something in the face  
Of men and women which accepts the earth,  
And all its havings, as its right of birth,  
But not its quittance, not its resting-place.

## xvi.

There have been moments, at the set of sun,  
When I have long'd for wings upon the wind,  
That I might seek a planet to my mind,  
More full-develop'd; than this present one;  
With more of scope, when all is said and done,  
To satisfy the wants of human kind.

## xvii.

World with thee, a home in some remote  
And unknown region, which no sage's ken  
Has compass'd yet; of which no human pen  
Has traced the limits; where no terrors float  
In wind or wave, and where the soul may note  
A thousand raptures unreveal'd to men.

## xviii.

To be transported in a magic car,  
On some transcendent night in early June,  
Beyond the horn'd projections of the moon ;  
To have our being in a bridal star,  
In lands of light, where only angels are,  
Athwart the spaces where the comets swoon.

## xix.

To be all this : to have in our estate  
Worlds without stint, and quit them for the clay  
Of some new planet where a summer's day  
Lasts fifty years ; and there to celebrate  
Our Golden Wedding, by the will of Fate—  
This were a subject for a seraph's lay.

## xx.

This were a life to live,—a life indeed,  
A thing to die for ; if, in truth, we die  
When we but put our mortal trappings by.  
This were a climax for a lover's need  
Sweeter than songs, and holier than the creed  
Of half the zealots who have sought the sky.

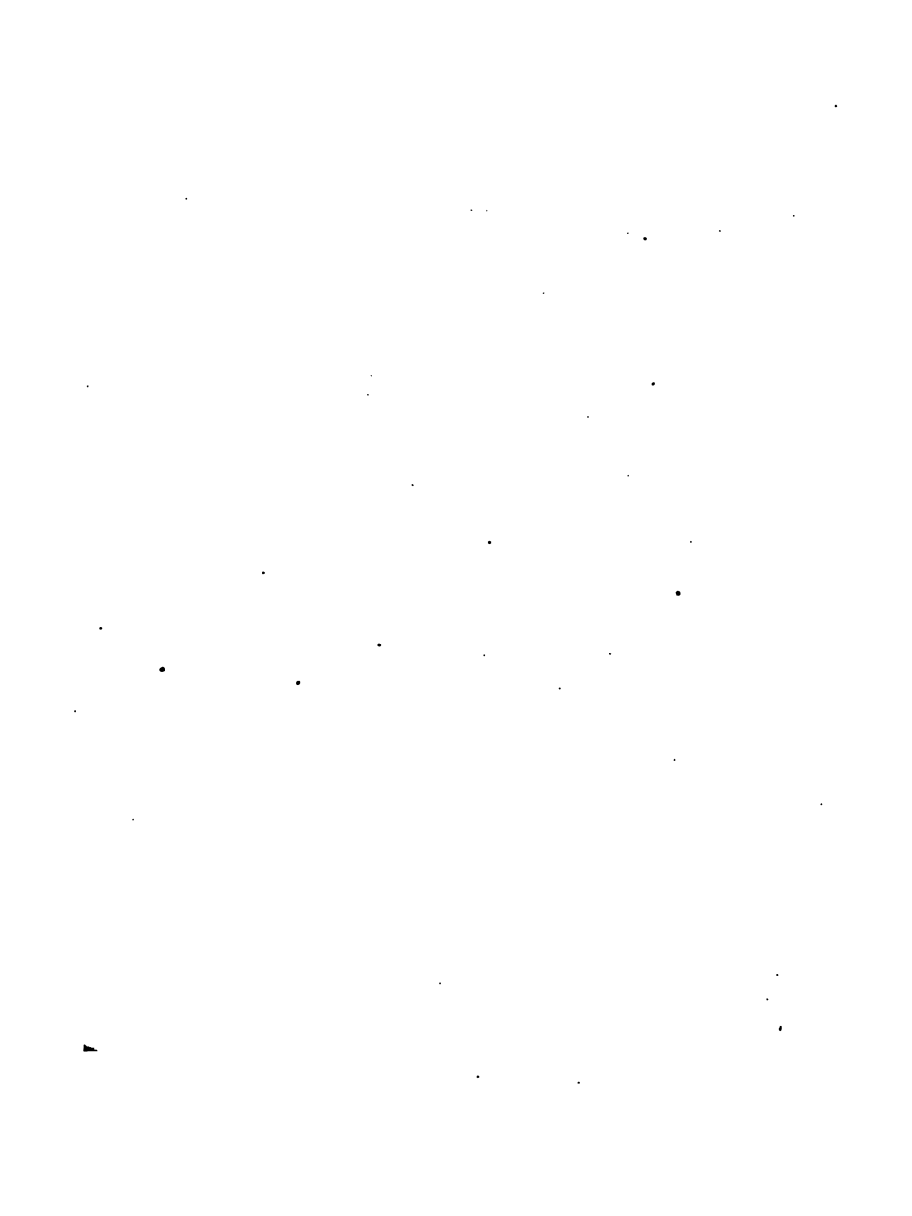




Letter viii.

# A VISION.

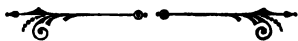






## LETTER VIII.

### A Vision.



i.

**Y**ES, I will tell thee what, a week ago,  
I dreamt of thee, and all the joy therein  
Which I conceiv'd, and all the holy din  
Of throbbing music, which appear'd to flow  
From room to room, as if to make me know  
The power thereof to lead me out of sin.

ii.

**I** thought I saw thee, in a ray of light,  
This side a grove—a dream within a dream—  
With tender eyes of pleading, and the gleam  
Of far-off summers in thy tresses bright ;  
And I did tremble at the gracious sight,  
As one who sees a naiad in a stream.



## iii.

I follow'd thee. I knew that, in the wood,  
Where thus we met, there was a trysting place.  
I follow'd thee, as mortals in a chace  
Follow the deer. I knew that it was good  
To track thy step, and promptly understood  
The fitful blush that flutter'd to thy face.

## iv.

I followed thee to where a brook did run  
Close to a grot ; and there I knelt to thee.  
And then a score of birds flew over me ;  
Birds which arrived because the day was done,  
To sing the Sanctus of the setting sun ;  
And then I heard thy voice upon the lea.

## v.

“ Follow ! ” it cried. I rose and follow'd fast ;  
And, in my dream, I felt the dream was true,  
And that, full soon, Titania, with her crew  
Of imps and fays, would meet me on the blast.  
But this was hindered ; and I quickly passed  
Into the valley where the cedars grew.

## vi.

And what a scene, ah God ! and what repose,  
And what sad splendour in the burning west :  
A languid sun low-dropping to his rest,  
And incense rising, as of old it rose,  
To do him honour at the daylight's close,  
The birds entranced, and all the winds repress'd.

## vii.

I followed thee. I came to where a shrine  
Stood in the trees, and where an oaken gate  
Swung in the air, so turbulent of late.  
I touch'd thy hand ; it quiver'd into mine ;  
And then I look'd into thy face benign  
And saw the smile, for which the angels wait.

## viii.

And lo ! the moon had sailed into the main  
Of that blue sky, as if therein did poise  
A silver boat ; and then a tuneful noise  
Broke from the copse where late a breeze was slain ;  
And nightingales, in ecstasy of pain,  
Did break their hearts with singing the old joys.

## ix.

"Is this the spot?" I cried, "is this the spot  
Where I must tell thee all my heart's desire?  
Is this the time when I must drink the fire,  
And eat the snow, and find it fever-hot?  
I freeze with heat, and yet I fear it not;  
And all my pulses thrill me like a lyre."

## x.

"A wondrous light was thrown upon thy face;  
It was the light within; it was the ray  
Of thine own soul. And then a voice did say,  
"Glory to God the King, and Jesu's grace  
Here and hereafter!" And about the place  
A radiance shone surpassing that of day.

## xi.

"It was thy voice. It was the voice I prize  
More than the sound of April in the dales,  
More than the songs of larks and nightingales,  
And more than teachings of the worldly-wise.  
"Glory to God," it said, "for in the skies,  
And here on earth, 'tis He alone prevails."

## xii.

And then I asked thee : " Shall I tell thee now  
All that I think of, when by land and sea,  
The days and nights illumine the world for me ?  
And how I muse on marriage, as I bow  
In God's own places, with a throbbing brow ?  
And how, at night, I dream of kissing thee ? "

## xiii.

But thou did'st answer : " First behold this man !  
He is thy lord, for love's and lady's sake ;  
He is thy master, or I much mistake."  
And I perceiv'd hard by, a phantom wan  
And wild and kingly, who did, walking, span  
The open space that lay beside the brake.

## xiv.

It was Beethoven. It was he who came  
From monstrous shades, to journey yet awhile  
In pleasant nooks, and vainly seek the smile  
Of one lov'd woman—she to whom his fame  
Had been a glory had she sought the same,  
And lov'd a soul so grand, so free from guile.

## xv.

It was the Kaiser of the land of song,  
The giant-singer who did storm the gates  
Of Heaven and Hell, a man to whom the Fates  
Were fierce as furies, and who suffer'd wrong  
And ached and bore it, and was brave and strong,  
But gaunt as ocean when its rage abates.

## xvi.

I knew his tread. I knew him by his look  
Of pent-up sorrow—by his hair unkempt  
And torn attire—and by his smile exempt  
From all but pleading. Yet his body shook  
With some great joy, and onward he betook  
His echoing steps the way that I had dreamt.

## xvii.

I bow'd my head. The lordly being pass'd.  
He was my king, and I did bow to him.  
And when I rais'd mine eyes they were as dim  
As tears could make them. And the moon, aghast,  
Glared in the sky ; and westward came a blast  
Which shook the earth like shouts of cherubim.

## xviii.

I held my breath. I could have fled the place,  
As men have fled before the wrath of God.  
But I beheld my lady where she trod  
The darken'd path ; and I did cry apace :  
" Help me, my lady ! " and thy lustrous face  
Gladden'd the air, and quicken'd all the sod.

## xix.

Then did I hear again that voice of cheer,  
" Lovest thou me " it said, " or music best ? "  
I seized thy hand, I drew thee to my breast.  
" Thee, only thee ! " I cried, " From year to year,  
Thee only thee—not fame ! " And, silver-clear,  
Thy voice responded : " God will grant the rest."

## xx.

I kiss'd thine eyes. I kiss'd them where the blue  
Peep'd smiling forth ; and proudly as before  
I heard the tones that thrill'd me to the core :  
" If thou love me," they said, " if thou be true,  
Thou shalt have fame, and love, and music too."  
And then I kiss'd the lips that I adore.





Letter ix.

TO-MORROW.









## LETTER IX.

To-morrow.



i.

O LOVE! O Love! O Gateway of Delight!  
Thou porch of peace, thou pageant of the prime  
Of all God's creatures! I am here to climb  
Thine upward steps, and daily and by night  
To gaze beyond them, and to search aright  
The far-off splendour of thy track sublime.

ii.

For, in thy precincts, on the further side,  
Beyond the turret where the bells are rung,  
Beyond the chapel where the rites are sung,  
There is a garden fit for any bride.  
O Love! by thee, by thee are sanctified  
The joys thereof, to keep our spirits young.

## iii.

By thee, dear Love ! by thee, if all be well—  
And we be wise enough to own the touch  
Of some bright folly that has thrill'd us much—  
By thee, till death, we may regain the spell  
Of wizard Merlin, and in every dell  
Confront a Muse, and bow to it as such.

## iv.

Love ! Happy Love ! Behold me where I stand  
This side thy portal, with my straining eyes  
Turn'd to the Future. Cloudless are the skies,  
And, far adown the road which thou hast spann'd,  
I see the groves of that elected land  
Which is the place I call my paradise.

## v.

But what is this ? The plains are known to me ;  
The hills are known, the fields, the little fence,  
The noisy brook as clear as innocence,  
And this old oak, the wonder of the lea,  
Which stops the wind to know if there shall be  
Sorrow for men, or pride, or recompense.

## vi.

I know these things, yet hold it little blame  
To know them not, though in their proud array,  
The flowers advance to make the world so gay.  
Ah, what a change ! The things I know by name  
Look unfamiliar all, and like a flame  
The roses burn upon the hedge to-day.

## vii.

The grass is velvet. There are pearls thereon,  
And golden signs, and braid that doth appear  
Made for a bridal. This is fairy gear  
If I mistake not. I shall know anon.  
Nature herself will teach me how to con  
The new-found words to thank the glowing year.

## viii.

This is the path that led me to the brook ;  
And this the mead, and this the mossy slope,  
And this the place where breezes did elope  
With giddy moths, enamour'd of a look ;  
And here I sat alone, or with a book,  
Dreaming the dreams of constancy and hope.

## ix.

I loved the river well ; but not till now  
Did I perceive the marvels of the shore.  
This is a cave, and this an emerald floor ;  
And here Sir Eglantine might make a vow,  
And here a guilty king might bend and bow  
Before a child, and break his word no more.

## x.

The day is dying. I shall see him die,  
And I shall watch the sunset, and the red  
Of all that splendor when the day is dead.  
And I shall see the stars upon the sky,  
And think them torches that are lit on high  
To light the Lord Apollo to his bed.

## xi.

And sweet To-morrow, like a golden bark,  
Will call for me, and lead me on apace  
To where I shall behold, in all her grace,  
Mine own true lady, whom a happy lark  
Did late salute, appointing, after dark,  
A nightingale to carol in his place.

xii.

Oh, come to me ! Oh, come, belovéd day,  
O sweet To-morrow ! Youngest of the sons  
Of old King Time, to whom Creation runs  
As men to God. Oh, quickly with thy ray  
Anoint my head, and teach me how to pray,  
As gentle Jesus taught the little ones.

xiii.

I am weary of the waiting hours,  
I am weary of the tardy night ;  
The hungry moments rob me of delight,  
The crawling minutes steal away my powers ;  
And I am sick at heart, as one who cowers  
In lonely haunts, remov'd from human sight.

xiv.

How shall I think the night was meant for sleep,  
When I must count the dreadful hours thereof,  
And cannot beat them down, or bid them doff  
Their hateful masks ? A man may wake and weep  
From hour to hour, and, in the silence deep,  
See shadows move, and almost hear them scoff.

## xv.

Oh come to me, To-morrow ! like a friend,  
And not as one who bideth for the clock.  
Be swift to come, and I will hear thee knock,  
And though the Night refuse to make an end  
Of her dull peace, I promptly will descend  
And let thee in, and thank thee for the shock.

## xvi.

Dear, good To-morrow ! in my life, till now,  
I did not think to need thee quite so soon.  
I did not think that I should hate the moon,  
Or new or old, or that my fevered brow  
Requir'd the sun to cool it. I will bow  
To this new day, that he may grant the boon.

## xvii

Yes, it will hear. The day will dawn at last.  
Day and the tide approach. They cannot rest.  
They must approach. They must, by every test  
Of all men's knowledge, neither slow nor fast  
Approach and front us. When the night is past,  
The morrow's dawn will lead me to my quest.

## xviii.

Then shall I tremble greatly, and be glad.  
For I shall meet my true-love all alone ;  
And none shall tell me of her dainty zone,  
And none shall say how sweetly she is clad ;  
But I shall know it. Men may call me mad ;  
But I shall know how bright the world has grown.

## xix.

There is a grammar of the lips and eyes,  
And I have learnt it. There are tokens sure  
Of trust in love ; and I have found them pure.  
Is love the guerdon then ? Is love the prize ?  
It is ! It is ! We find it in the skies,  
And here on earth 'tis all that will endure.

## xx.

All things for love. All things in some divine  
And wish'd for way, conspire, as Nature knows,  
To some great good ; and where a daisy grows  
There grows a joy. And all the trees combine  
To talk of peace, when mortals would repine ;  
And he is false to God who flouts the rose.

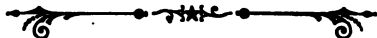






## LETTER X.

### A Retrospect.



**J**WALK again beside the roaring sea,  
And once again I harken to the speech  
Of waves exulting on the madden'd beach.  
A sound of awful joy it seems to me,  
A shuddering sound of God's eternity,  
Telling of things beyond the sage's reach.

ii.

**I**walk alone. I see the bounding waves  
Curl'd into foam. I watch them as they leap  
Like wild sea-horses loosen'd from the deep.  
And well I know that they have seen the graves  
Of shipwreck'd sailors ; for Disaster paves  
The fearful fields where reapers cannot reap.

## iii.

Out there, in islands where the summer sun  
Goes down in tempest, there are loathsome things  
That crawl to shore, and flap unsightly wings.  
But here there are no monsters that can run  
To catch the limbs of bathers ; no ! not one ;  
And here the wind is harmless when it stings.

## iv.

There is a glamour all about the bay,  
As if the nymphs of Greece had tarried here.  
The sands are golden, and the rocks appear  
Crested with silver ; and the breezes play  
Snatches of song they humm'd when far away,  
And then are hush'd, as if from sudden fear.

## v.

They think of thee. They hunt ; they meditate.  
They will not quit the shore till they have seen  
The very spot where thou did'st stand serene  
In all thy beauty ; and of me they prate,  
Knowing I love thee. And, like one elate,  
The grand old sea remembers what hath been.

## vi.

How many hours, how many days we met  
Here on the beach, in that delirious time  
When all the waves appear'd to break in rhyme.  
Life was a joy, and love was like a debt  
Paid and repaid in kisses—good to get,  
And good to lose—unhoarded, yet sublime.

## vii.

We wander'd here. We saw the tide advance.  
We saw it ebb. We saw the widow'd shore  
Waiting for Ocean, and its organ roar,  
Knowing that, day by day, through happy chance,  
She would be wooed anew, amid the dance  
Of bridal waves, high-bounding as before.

## viii.

And I remember how, at flush of morn,  
Thou didst depart alone, to find a nook  
Where none could see thee; where a lover's look  
Were profanation worse than any scorn;  
And how I went my way, among the corn,  
To wait for thee beside the Shepherd's brook.

## ix.

And lo ! from out a cave thou didst emerge,  
Sweet as thyself, the flower of Womankind.  
I know 'twas thus ; for, in my secret mind,  
I see thee now. I see thee in the surge  
Of those wild waves, well knowing that they urge  
Some idle wish, untalk'd of to the wind.

## x.

I think the beach was thankful to have known  
Thy warm, white body, and the blessedness  
Of thy first shiver ; and I well can guess  
How, when thy limbs were toss'd and overthrown,  
The sea was pleased, and every smallest stone,  
And every wave, was proud of thy caress.

## xi.

A maiden diving, with dishevell'd hair,  
Sheer from a rock ; a syren of the deep  
Call'd into action, ere a wave could leap  
Breast-high to daunt her ; Daphne, by a prayer,  
Lured from a forest for the sea to bear—  
This were a dream to fill a poet's sleep.

## xii.

This were a thing for Phoebus to have eyed ;  
And he did eye it. Yea, the Deathless One  
Did eye thy beauty. It was madly done.  
He saw thee in the rising of the tide.  
He saw thee well. The truth is not denied :  
The shore was proud to show thee to the sun.

## xiii.

Never since Venus, at a god's decree,  
Uprose from ocean, has there liv'd on earth  
A face like thine, a form of so much worth ;  
And nowhere has the moon-obeying sea  
Known such perfection, down from head to knee,  
And knee to foot, since that Olympian birth.

## xiv.

And, sooth, the moon was anxious to have placed  
Her head beside thee, on the waters bright.  
But she was foil'd ; for thou so late at night  
Wouldst not go forth ; no ! not to be embraced  
By Nature's Queen, though round about the waist  
She would have ring'd thee with her softest light.

## xv.

**Q**h me! had I a lute of sovereign power  
I would enlarge on this, and plainly show  
That there is nothing like thee here below ;  
Nothing so comely, nothing in its dower  
Of youth and grace, so like a human flower,  
And white withal, and guiltless as the snow.

## xvi.

**F**or thou art fair as lilies, with the flush  
That roses have while waiting for a kiss ;  
And when thou smilest nothing comes amiss.  
The earth is glad to see thy dimpled blush.  
Had I the lute of Orpheus I would hush  
All meaner sounds to tell the stars of this.

## xvii.

**I** would, I swear, by Pallas' own consent,  
Inform all creatures whom the stars behold  
That thou art mine, and that a pen of gold  
With ink of fire, though by an angel lent,  
Were all too poor to tell my true content,  
And how I love thee seven times seventy fold.

## xviii.

And sure am I that, in the ancient days,  
Achilles heard no voice so passing sweet,  
And none so trancing, none that could compete  
With thine for fervor ; none, in watery ways  
Where Neptune dwelt, so worthy of the praise  
Of Thetis' son, the sure and swift of feet.

## xix.

He never met upon the plains of Troy  
Goddess or maiden so divinely fraught.  
Not Helen's self, for whom the Trojans fought,  
Was like to thee. Her love had much alloy,  
But thine has none. Her beauty was a toy,  
But thine's a gem, unsullied and unbought.

## xx.

And ne'er was seen by poet, in a sweven,  
An eye like thine, a face so fair to see  
As that which makes the sunlight sweet to me.  
Nor need I wait for death, or for the levin  
In yonder cloud, to find the path to Heaven.  
It fronts me here. 'Tis manifest in thee.







Letter xi.

\* F A I T H . \*

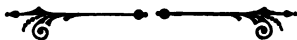






## LETTER XI.

### Faith.



i.

Now will I sing to God a song of praise,  
And thank the morning for the light it brings,  
Aye! and the earth for every flower that  
And every tree that, in the jocund days, [springs,  
Thrills to the blast. My voice I will upraise  
To thank the world for every bird that sings.

ii.

I will unpack my mind of all its fears.  
I will advance to where the matin fires  
Absorb the hills. My hopes and my desires  
Will lead me safe; and day will have no tears  
And night no torture, as in former years,  
To warp my nature when my soul aspires.

## iii.

♪ will endure. I will not strive to peep  
Behind the barriers of the days to come,  
Nor, adding up the figures of a sum,  
Dispose of prayers as men dispose of sleep.  
I cannot count the stars, or walk the deep :  
But I can pray, and Faith shall not be dumb.

## iv.

♪ take myself and thee as mine estate—  
Thee and myself. The world is centred there.  
If thou be well I know the skies are fair ;  
If not, they press me down with leaden weight,  
And all is dark ; and morning comes too late ;  
And all the birds are tuneless in the air.

## v.

♪ need but thee : thee only. Thou alone  
Art all my joy ; a something to the sight  
As grand as Silence, and as snowy white.  
And do thou pardon if I make it known,  
As oft I do, with mine Amati's tone,  
Amid the stillness of the starry night.

## vi.

Oh, give me pity of thy heart and mind,  
Mine own sweet lady, if I vex thee now.  
If the repeating of my constant vow  
Be undesired, have pity ! I were blind,  
And deaf and dumb, and mad, were I inclined  
To curb my feelings when to thee I bow.

## vii.

Forgive the challenge of my longing lips  
If these offend thee ; and forgive me, too,  
If I perceive, within thine eyes of blue,  
More than I utter—more than, in eclipse,  
A man may note atween the argent tips  
Of frightened Dian whom the Fates pursue.

## viii.

It is the thing I dream of ; 'tis the thing  
We know as Rapture, when, with sudden thrill,  
It snares the heart and subjugates the will ;  
I mean the pride, the power, by which we cling  
To natures nobler than the ones we bring,  
To keep entire the fire we cannot chill.

## ix.

Coolest of nymphs, my Lady ! whom I seek  
As sailors seek salvation out at sea,  
And poets fame, and soldiers victory,  
Behold ! I note the blush upon thy cheek,  
The flag of truce that tells me thou art meek  
And soon will yield thy fortress up to me.

## x.

It is thy soul ; it is thy soul in arms  
Which thus I conquer. All thy furtive sighs  
And all the glances of thy wistful eyes,  
Proclaim the swift surrender of thy charms.  
I kiss thy hand ; and tremors and alarms  
Discard, in parting, all their late disguise.

## xi.

They were not foes. They knew me, one and all ;  
They knew I lov'd thee, and they lured me on  
To try my fortune, and to wait thereon  
For just reward. The scaling of the wall  
Was not the meed ; there came the festival,  
And now there comes the crown that I must don.

## xii.

O my Belovèd ! I am king of thee,  
And thou my queen ; and I will wear the crown  
A little moment, for thy love's renown.  
Yea, for a moment, it shall circle me,  
And then be thine, so thou, upon thy knee,  
Do seek the same, with all thy tresses down.

## xiii.

For woman still is mistress of the man,  
Though man be master. 'Tis the woman's right  
To choose her king, and crown him in her sight,  
And make him feel the pressure of the span  
Of her soft arms, as only woman can,  
When with her weakness she excels his might.

## xiv.

And 'tis her joy withal to be so frail  
That he must shield her ; he of all the world  
Whom most she loves ; and then, if he be hurl'd  
To depths of sorrow she will more avail  
Than half a senate. Troubles may assail,  
But she will guide him by her lips impearl'd.



## xv.

A woman clung to Cæsar ; he was great,  
And great the power he gain'd by sea and land.  
But when he wrong'd her, when he spurn'd the  
hand  
Which once he knelt to, when he scoff'd at Fate,  
Glory dispers'd, and left him desolate ;  
For God remember'd all that first was plann'd.

## xvi.

The cannon's roar, the wisdom of the sage,  
The strength of armies, and the thrall of kings—  
All these are weak compared to weaker things.  
Napoleon fell because, in puny rage,  
He wrong'd his house ; and earth became a cage  
For this poor eagle with his batter'd wings.

## xvii.

Believe me, Love ! I honour, night and day,  
The name of Woman. 'Tis the nobler sex.  
Villains may shame it ; sorrows may perplex ;  
And still 'tis watchful. Man may take away  
All its possessions, all its worldly sway,  
And yet be worshipp'd by the soul he wrecks.

xviii.

A word of love to Woman is as sweet  
 As nectar'd rapture in a golden bowl ;  
 And when she quaffs the heavens asunder roll,  
 And God looks through. And, from His judgment  
 He blesses those who part, and those who meet, [seat  
 And those who join the links of soul with soul.

xix.

And are there none untrue? God knows there are!  
 Aye, there are those who learn in time the laugh  
 That ends in madness—women who for chaff  
 Have sold their corn—who seek no guiding-star,  
 And find no faith to light them from afar ;  
 Of whom 'tis said : " They need no epitaph."

xx.

All this is known ; but lo ! for sake of One  
 Who lives in glory—for my mother's sake,  
 For thine, and her's, O Love !—I pity take  
 On all poor women. Jesu's will be done !  
 Honor for all, and infamy for none,  
 This side the borders of the burning lake.





Letter xii.

VICTORY.







## LETTER XII.

### Victory.



i.

Now have I reach'd the goal of my desire,  
For thou hast sworn—as sweetly as a bell  
Makes out its chime—the oath I love to tell,  
The fealty-oath of which I never tire.  
The lordly forest seems a giant's lyre,  
And sings and rings the thoughts that o'er it swell.

ii.

The air is fill'd with voices. I have found  
Comfort at last, enthrallment, and a joy  
Past all belief; a peace without alloy.  
There is a splendour all about the ground  
As if from Eden, when the world was drown'd,  
Something had come which death could not destroy.

## iii.

**I**t seems, indeed, as if to me were sent  
A smile from Heaven—as if to-day the clods  
Were lined with silk—the trees divining rods,  
And roses gems for some high tournament.  
I should not be so proud, or so content,  
If I could sup to-night with all the gods.

## iv.

**C**shrined saint would change his place with me  
If he but knew the worth of what I feel.  
He is enrobed indeed, and for his weal  
Hath much concern ; but how forlorn is he !  
How pale his pomp ! He cannot sue to thee,  
But I am sainted every time I kneel.

## v.

**T**o-day I walk'd abroad ere yet the dark  
Had left the hills, and down the beaten road  
I saunter'd forth a mile from mine abode.  
I heard afar the watchdog's sullen bark,  
And, near at hand, the tuning of a lark,  
Safe in its nest, but weighted with an ode.

## vi.

The moon was pacing up the sky serene,  
Pallid and pure, as if she late had shown  
Her outmost side, and fear'd to make it known ;  
And, like a nun, she gazed upon the scene  
From bars of cloud that seem'd to stand between,  
And pray'd and smiled, and smiled and pray'd alone.

## vii.

The stars had fled. Not one remain'd behind  
To warn or comfort ; or to make amends  
For hope delay'd, for ecstasy that ends  
At dawn's approach. The firmament was blind  
Of all its eyes ; and, wanton up the wind,  
There came the shuddering that the twilight sends.

## viii.

The hills exulted at the Morning's birth ;  
And clouds assembled, e'en as heralds run  
Before a king to say the fight is won.  
The rich, warm daylight fell upon the earth  
Like wine outpour'd, in madness or in mirth,  
To celebrate the rising of the sun.



## ix.

And when the soaring lark had done his prayer,  
The holy thing, self-poised amid the blue  
Of that great sky, did seem a space or two  
To pause and think, and then did clip the air  
And dropp'd to earth, to claim his guerdon there.  
"Thank God!" I cried, "My dearest dream is true."

## x.

I was too happy, then, to leap and dance ;  
But I could ponder ; I could gaze and gaze  
From earth to sky and back to woodland ways.  
The bird had thrill'd my heart, and cheer'd my glance  
For he had found to-day his nest romance,  
And lov'd a mate, and crown'd her with his praise.

## xi

O Love ! my Love ! I would not for a throne,  
I would not for the thrones of all the kings  
Who yet have liv'd, or for a seraph's wings,  
Or for the nod of Jove when night hath flown,  
Consent to rule an empire all alone.  
No ! I must have the grace of our two rings.

## xii.

I must possess thee from the crowning curl  
Down to the feet, and from the beaming eye  
Down to the bosom where my treasures lie.  
From blush to blush, and from the rows of pearl  
That light thy smile, I must possess thee, girl,  
And be thy lord and master till I die.

## xiii.

This, and no less : the keeper of thy fame,  
The proud controller of each silken tress,  
And each dear item of thy loveliness,  
And every oath, and every dainty name  
Known to a bride : a picture in a frame  
Of golden hair, to turn to and caress.

## xiv.

And though I know thee prone, in idle hours,  
To laugh and talk with those who circumvent  
And make mad speeches; though I know the bent  
Of some such men, and though in ladies' bowers  
They brag of swords—I know my proven powers ;  
I know myself and thee, and am content.

## xv.

**I** know myself ; and why should I demur ?  
The lily, bowing to the breeze's play,  
Is not forgetful of the sun in May.  
She is his nymph, and with a servitor  
She doth but jest. The sun looks down at her,  
And knows her true, and loves her day by day.

## xvi.

**A**nd so I thee, O Syren of my heart !  
O lady white as lilies on the lea,  
And fair as foam upon the ocean free  
Whereon the sun hath sent a shining dart !  
E'en so I love thee, blameless as thou art,  
And with my soul's desire I compass thee.

## xvii.

**F**or thou art Woman in the sweetest sense  
Of true endowment, and a bride indeed  
Fit for Apollo. This is Woman's need :  
To be a beacon when the air is dense,  
A bower of peace, a life-long recompense—  
This is the sum of Woman's worldly creed.

## xviii.

And what is Man the while? And what his will?  
And what the furtherance of his earthly hope?  
To turn to faith, to turn as to a rope  
A drowning sailor; all his blood to spill  
From One he loves, to keep her out of ill—  
This is the will of Man, and this his scope.

## xix.

This like the tranquil sea, that knows anon  
It can be wild, and keep away from home  
A thousand ships—and lash itself to foam—  
And beat the shore, and all that lies thereon—  
And catch the thunder ere the flash has gone  
Forth from the cloud that spans it like a dome.

## xx.

This is the will of Man, and this is mine.  
But lo! I love thee more than mortal fame,  
More than myself, and more than those who came  
With Christ's commission from the goal divine.  
Soul of my soul—and mine as I am thine—  
I cling to thee, my Life! as fire to flame.

- /





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